

# Cutting the metal

## *Fabrication Shop has it covered*

TSgt. Patricia Collins  
*NCOIC public affairs*

From bending lines to welding pieces of metal to repair aircraft parts, the 629th Air Mobility Support Squadron Fabrication Shop has it covered.

The two-person shop is responsible for all sheet metal and welding repair for aircraft transiting Lajes Field. This can be something as simple as removing a screw that's been stripped to more complex issues like building brackets for brakes or repairing cracks on wings that can keep the aircraft from flying.

At other locations, the two shops, Aircraft Structural Maintenance and Aircraft Metals Technology, would not be so closely associated, but because it is a two-person shop, TSgt. Kevin Skates, 629th AMSS assistant sortie support section chief and SrA. William Everett, noncommissioned officer in charge of the Fabrication Shop have learned the basics of each other's career fields to provide continual coverage in case of emergencies or leave.

"We're the only people here capable of making structural or welding repairs," said Skates. "When an aircraft has a problem, if the part can't be ordered through supply, people depend on us to fix it. If we can't fix the part, the plane can't fly."

If this happens a maintenance recovery team is sent from the home unit of the aircraft involved. "We try to keep this to a minimum because it can be quite expensive," said Skates.

In addition to making repairs on aircraft, Everett and Skates also help members of the Aerospace Ground Equipment Shop by providing metal working services for them. "This is where about 75 percent our work comes from," said Skates.

But not all work happens directly on the aircraft. One example of this is a liquid oxygen converter servicing trailer

that Everett along with help from SrA. Robert Lyon, 65th Operations Support Squadron, developed.

"Several of the fighter aircraft maintainers had problems getting their LOX serviced," said Everett. "So we built a trailer that allows them (maintainers) to remove the LOX converters from the aircraft and transport them directly to the LOX servicing



*Photos/TSgt. Patricia Collins*

SrA. William Everett cuts a piece of metal.



TSgt. Kevin Skates uses a lathe which can be used to fabricate bearings for use on aircraft landing gears.

center. This cuts down on time required to service LOX on a fighter." Everett and Lyon completed the trailer, capable of carrying up to 20 LOX converters, in about two weeks.

"We also assist other units on base," said Skates. "When someone comes across a problem that needs sheet metal or welding expertise, they call us."

Skates said one of the biggest challenges they face is the communication problem between them and aircrews from foreign countries.

"Recently, we had a Pakistani C-130 land here with a prop that would not set properly. It had been forced on takeoff and damaged the engine. There was a retaining pin that had to be removed to allow the engine to be changed.

"The aircrew spoke little or no English, so we relied heavily on hand gestures and nods.

Skates and Everett take great pride in their work; so, if you find yourself with a screw loose (or stuck) call the 629th AMSS Fabrication Shop. They've got you covered.



SrA. William Everett puts flares on a piece of pipe.



TSgt. Kevin Skates welds a piece of metal.